THE GIFT OF LOVE

McCLOREY

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THE GIFT OF LOVE

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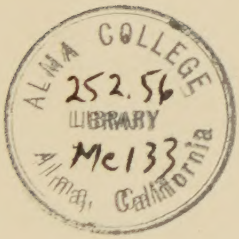
THE BRAZEN SERPENT
THE UNKNOWN GOD
SIX FUNDAMENTALS OF RELIGION

THE GIFT OF LOVE

BY

JOHN A. McCLOREY, S. J.



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THE GIFT OF LOVE

THE GIFT OF LOVE

I

A REMEMBRANCE

"Greater love than this no man hath than that a man should lay down his life for his friend." But Christ had such love; for He died for us. Christ died for us and He wished us to remember His death. Christ longed not for honor, wealth, distinction, comforts and luxury. But He did long for a place in our heart and memory. Just as a great king, the night before a battle in which he foresees his death, might request his faithful followers to keep a yearly banquet in memory of his death in victory and victory in death; so Christ, about to pass out of life, asked His Apostles to spread a daily Eucharistic feast in commemoration of His conquest of Hell, on the morrow, on the heights of Calvary. For when He had given them His Body and Blood under the separate forms of bread and wine, He said

to them longingly: "Do this in memory of Me."

Moses, at the point of death on the threshold of the Promised Land, recalling all that he had done for his people, must have wished that they would remember him. Whether he expressed his wish or not is uncertain. At any rate the Hebrews kept the Pasch once a year for centuries to renew the memory of their delivery from Egypt under his leadership.

Let us not be unmindful of Christ, of whom Moses was only a type. Hence, every time we see the priest place the Host separately upon the patin and the wine separately in the cup, let us remind ourselves devoutly of the wan Body of Christ hanging, apart, upon the Cross, drained of its crimson streams to their very fountainhead; and the Blood of Christ, shed and poured out, apart, upon the ground, saturating the foot of the Cross.

Many men fail to see the connection between the Eucharist and the Cross. "Why" they say, "should the Sacrament of love, peace and joy be so intimately joined to the tragedy of pain? Why should we grieve at a feast?"

Christ ordained that the Eucharist should be a symbol of His death. For since the dear Sacrament was bought at a price, and the price of it was the death of Christ, it is only right that the snowy bosom of the Host should be set and adorned with the ruby jewels of His Blood.

In human relationships true love has never been dissociated from pain. A genuine lover is never quite satisfied until he has proven his love by suffering. Love without suffering is a soothing comfort, an exquisite luxury, if you will: but love *with* suffering is a sublimity. That sublimity Christ actualized in His life and death. And so it is quite natural that the white Host of loving remembrance should be pierced, as it were, with the blood-besprinkled nails and thorns of Calvary.

"Many there are," says Thomas à Kempis, "who are pleased to sup with Christ at His board, but few that are willing to carry His Cross." We ought to be worthy of Christ, in some poor way at least. So let us keep two great thoughts in our mind and two great loves in our heart;—the thought and love of the Sacrament of Love, the thought and love of the Sacrifice of Pain; and let

us keep one strong resolution in our will;—the resolve to shed our blood, at least in spirit, for our Eucharistice Crucified King.

II

A SACRAMENT

The Eucharist is a sacrament and a sacrifice. A sacrament differs from a sacrifice. A sacrifice is intended principally for the glory of God; a sacrament primarily for the help of man. A sacrifice is a form of public worship; a sacrament is a more or less private affair. A sacrifice may be attended by a sinner without the commission of new sin: With the exception of Baptism and Penance, sacraments must be received in the state of grace. A sacrifice redounds to the advantage of all men; a sacrament bestows grace only on the individual who worthily receives it. A sacrifice is only a *moral* influence, inducing God to confer spiritual benefits; a sacrament has *in itself* the power of communicating grace;—not, it is true, a natural, inherent power, but one that has been arbitrarily given it by God.

According to the Catechism, a sacrament is an outward sign (or symbol) of inward

grace. For example, the outward sign of Baptism is the water and the words; of Matrimony, the words of contract; of Penance, the words of absolution. The outward sign of the Eucharist are the appearances of bread and wine, along with the words of consecration. While the other Sacraments are transient, beginning and ending with their administration, the Sacrament of the Altar is permanent, lasting as long as the appearances of bread and wine remain. And while the inward grace, symbolized in the other six Sacraments, is some particular, created grace, helpful for the various phases of the spiritual life, in the Eucharist it is the Author of grace Himself, Christ, the Son of God in four states: 1st, as He was on earth: 2d, as He is on the altar: 3d, as He is in the Church: 4th, as He is in heaven.

a. *Symbol of Christ on Earth*

The Eucharist is a symbol of Christ as He was in the days of His mortality. For, just as in the Incarnation the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity came to earth instantly on hearing Mary say: "Be it done unto me according to thy word," taking up His hab-

itation in the cloister of her womb; so in the mystery of the Eucharist He descends from the heights at the priest's words: "This is my Body; this is my Blood," entering the enclosure of the tabernacle. As nineteen hundred years ago He obscured the effulgent splendor of His Divinity beneath the weeds of human flesh, emptying Himself of His Godhead and taking the form of a slave, that He might identify Himself with the human race; so now every day He hides the alluring beauty of His Humanity under the veils of bread and wine, humbling Himself to the form of food and drink, that He may become one with each individual man and woman in the intimacy of their breast. As He lay in the manger at Bethlehem, wrapt in swaddling clothes, so He reclines in the crib of the tabernacle, arrayed in the snow-white garment of the Host. As He lived in the cottage of Nazareth, far from the madding crowd, so He tarries on the altar, satisfied with the company of a few Marys and Josephs at His feet. As He spoke from many a pulpit in life, charming the people with the language of His lips, so He holds men captivated today from the preaching-stand of the altar with silent

eloquence. As He went about doing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, so now in Church He restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and lifts from many a heart the burden of grief, fears, scruples, regrets and doubts which are the common lot of mankind. As He was sacrificed on Calvary, so He is offered by the priest. As He issued from the tomb on Easter morning to comfort His followers, so at communion time He comes forth from His altar sepulchre to cheer communicants. And as He rose from Olivet to heaven, so, in a sense, after the consumption of the Sacred Species, He mounts daily to His Father's throne.

But the Eucharist is more particularly a symbol of Christ's burial. For as Christ was taken down from the Cross and placed in the tomb, far from the noise and carousing of Jerusalem, alone, in the dark, His eyes obscured by the lids of death, His lips sealed and His ears stopped by the fingers of mortality, His heart still and His limbs bound tight with the cerements of the dead; so, in the Mystery of Love, He is laid in the sepulchre of the Tabernacle, at a distance from the hum, bustle and brilliancy of the

world, in solitude, equivalently dead;—dead as far as external activities are concerned; His eyes, ears and lips swathed in the Eucharistic winding-sheet and His limbs enclosed by the confining, cramping circle of the tiny Host.

Would we like to have been hidden away from the world with Christ in His tomb? Well, let us bury ourselves with Him in the tabernacle. Then we may hope that, as He rose from the dead, we, too, leaving the old man of sin behind us, may come forth from the church in the brilliancy of a new spiritual life.

b. *A Symbol of Christ on the Altar*

The Eucharist is a symbol of Christ on the Altar; in other words, It is a symbol of Itself.

For as we consume the accidents of bread and wine, so we eat the Body and drink the Blood of Christ. But there is this great difference between corporal and Eucharistic food and drink, that whereas we change the former into our own substance, Eucharistic feasters on the contrary are metamorphosed into what they consume. As the drop of

water poured by the priest into the chalice of wine at the Offertory is converted, in a sense, into wine; so the plebeian nature of man is elevated by the grace of Communion into the Divine Nature of Christ;—we are raised to the condition of God; as St. Peter says, we are transformed and made partakers of the Godhead.

Also, morally, we are converted into the Humanity of Christ. By receiving frequently we learn to see with His eyes, speak with His lips, love with His Heart. Our intellect which before was obscure is changed into the radiant intellect of Christ. Our will which was like wax in fire is converted into the iron Will of Christ. Our heart which may have been the receptacle of passionate emotions becomes instinct with the loves, hopes, sorrows and ambitions of His Heart. Our eyes which may have been avenues of lascivious sights are lidded with the modesty of Christ's eyes. Our tongue which was barbed with sarcasms and ironies is sweetened with the meek graciousness of His speech. Our hands coldly closed to the poor open with the generous beneficence of His hands. Our feet propped in sloth on cushions of

down are endued with the zealous energy of His Feet. Our whole body and soul are thrilled through with the living energy of Christ; so that we may say with St. Paul, "I live; now not I, but Christ liveth in me." We come as weaklings to the table of the Lord and we leave divine; we enter the church as miserable sons and daughters of Eve and we go back to our homes, reincarnated Marys and Christs. As a chrysalis mounts from its wormy shell, transformed, so we rise from the casing of our sensuality to spiritual heights on the splendid wings of the Eucharistic grace of Christ.

c. *A Symbol of Christ in the Church*

The Eucharist is a symbol of the mystical Body of Christ,—the Church.

As the Church is one moral entity, compacted of many members of all nations, climes and times, of many degrees of culture, grades of wealth and classes of society; so the Eucharistic appearance of bread is one morsel, composed of many particles of wheat gathered from a multitude of golden sheaves; and the appearance of wine is one draught, made up of many drops, pressed

from grapes gathered perhaps from a number of hillsides of the land.

Now, as the particles and drops, if they were endued with intelligence, would think it an unnatural sin that, though belonging to the one Sacrament of Love, they should nevertheless be mutually discordant; so we, if we use our minds, will reflect how unnatural it would be for us, members of one Church, not to live together in harmony. Christ once said: "By this all men shall know that you are my disciples that you have love one for another"; and He instituted His Sacrament of Love immediately before giving His Sermon on love and making His Sacrifice for love to remind us by this coincidence in time of our duty as communicants to live with our neighbor in peace. In the early days of Christianity the pagans were forced to exclaim when the Christians appeared: "Behold how they love one another"; and the reason was, because the followers of Christ issued from the Catacombs where they had partaken of the snowy loaf and the golden cup of love.

How unnatural and how unchristian, therefore, it would be for us who belong to the same Church, who have sprung from

the same ecclesiastical Mother, with the same spiritual blood in our veins, educated according to the same ideals, with the same traditions to look back to, living under the same church roof and feasting at the same altar-board, to live together as if we were enemies, with minds mutually antagonistic, with tongues steeped in bitterness or with lips sealed with the silence of uncharity.

Also unfriendliness among brethren is scandalous. As the odor of Christ (which is the perfume of fraternal charity) draws many to the Faith, so, inversely, nothing repels them more forcibly than what may be called, without exaggeration, the stench of dissension among members of one Church.

Hence, if you love Christ, if you do not wish to be accounted degenerate children of the martyrs, if you desire to be genuine members of the one multiform Church, if you propose to profit by the symbolic significance of the Eucharist; learn from the component unity of the appearance of bread, from the component unity of the appearance of wine, to have one spirit with your brethren despite differences of nationality, clime, education, social standing, taste and wealth.

d. *A Symbol of Christ in Heaven*

The Eucharist is a symbol of Christ glorified at His Father's banquet-board in heaven. I say a "symbol." For though the Eucharist is a reality, shadowed forth by many symbols of the Old Testament, yet in comparison with the super-real feast of heaven, It is only a type. For while now we see, taste and feel Him beneath the veils only by Faith; hereafter we shall feast our eyes upon His risen Body, we shall feast our mind upon His beautiful Soul and, in the radiance of the beatific vision, we shall behold His Divinity and be submerged in a rapture of delight. Our dear Lord has given us the bread and wine of earth to remind us of what is yet to come. We ought to avail ourselves of this suggestiveness, because in the valley of shades we need to be encouraged by the thought of the land of light. Hence, whenever we communicate, it will be well to recall the words of the hymn which St. Thomas Aquinas sang to the Eucharist some seven hundred years ago:

"Oh Jesus, hidden 'neath the veils from me,
I pray Thee, let me taste the ecstasy
Of seeing Thee in heaven face to face
And swooning, at Thy Feast, in Thy embrace."

III

A FEAST

a. *Contrasting Feasts*

The Eucharistic Feast which Christ spread for His Apostles on the first Holy Thursday Night looks more beautiful to us when we contrast it with a banquet to which Tiberius, the Roman Emperor, invited his followers the same night.

I see an imperial hall; in the center of it a board groaning beneath the richest and most varied contributions of sea, river, mountain and field. I hear strains of voluptuous music and I scent dreamy fragrances from the Orient. Senators, poets, orators, generals of armies, matrons and young women are there in their finery. Their eyes shine, conversation flows, wit sparkles, merriment is on tip-toe, laughter rings.

One would imagine that the Roman sense of dignity would save the feasters from sensuous excesses. But, it was not so. Hours pass on through the night, lights grow

dim with the heavy breath of an intoxicated room, music swoons into silence, flowers droop, bright eyes lose their vivacity and brisk tongues their fluency, the spirit of revelry is stifled, men and women are jaded with the narcotic of pleasure, suffocation becomes general, the last vestiges of propriety disappear, and when the wan light of morning peeps in through the windows, its rays reveal an indiscriminate heap of aristocratic animality, saturated with the night's indulgence and limp in sodden unconsciousness.

When His time had come Christ bade His disciples go into the city and prepare for the Pasch in a large dining room. "Behold as you go into the city" He said, "there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water. . . . And he will show you a large dining-room, furnished: and there prepare."

The guest chamber, we may suppose, was long, clean and plain. In the middle of it was a table around which were couches. Through the windows Jerusalem could be seen; through the windows came the breezes and glow of sunset to cheer and enrich the interior. On the walls perhaps were pictures reminiscent of the olden glories of

the Jews. At the board sat fishermen, rough-hewn in feature and form and at the head of the table was the Saviour of the world. The love-light is in His eyes; and in theirs; and the very air is vibrant with the spirit of love. The lamb is set down; the wine and bread. And they feast in remembrance of the great night of yore. At the end of the Paschal Feast, He takes bread, breaks and gives to them, saying "This is my Body which shall be given for you." Then He takes the Chalice, with the words: "This is my Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for the remission of sins." Each takes a morsel, each takes a sip. John rests his head on his Saviour's breast. Peter is ready for death. Andrew and James cross their hands on their breasts and bow their heads. The others are rapt. And when all is done they rise silently and go out into the night.

Contrast these two scenes: Rome and Jerusalem; the banquet hall of Tiberius and the Upper Chamber of the Lord. There, is sensuous luxury; here, chaste simplicity! There, the lords and ladies of the Capital; here, plebeians of a despised Province of the East. There, glib lewdness of speech; here,

few words. There, indulgence; here, temperate restraint. There, guests sodden unto stupidity; here, guests thrilled with ecstacy. There, after the carousal, men carried to their homes to doze off their satiety; here, men, after the Supper, going forth willing to lay down their lives.

Here we have a contrast indeed between the grossly vulgar and the pure, the inspiring. Here is a feast in its two opposite possibilities; and here, therefore, in the baleful light of a pagan orgy we can better appreciate the contrasting delight of our Eucharistic Feast.

b. *The Feast in Type*

One of the most helpful means of understanding and appreciating a thing is the study of its types. While the thing itself is more excellent than its type, yet the type is more appealing to the imagination and heart on account of its concrete and tangible character.

For this reason authors of literature either consciously or unconsciously are prolific of figures of speech.

But there are figures in fact as well as

in speech. An event, besides being an objective reality, may also serve the purpose of prefiguring a future happening. Thus the Old Testament as a whole was a shadowing of the New. In particular Moses was a type of Christ; and the passage of the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land was an image of the journey of Christians from earth to their Father's House. We can do no better then, in our attempt to set a proper value on the Eucharist as our Feast, than to view It in the light of Its types in the Old Testament.

When the Prophet Elias dwelt in a desert-place, an Angel supplied him with bread for his sustenance. His spirit was cheered by the food and in the strength of it he walked to the mountain of God.

David, approaching the tabernacle with his followers, worn out with his march, helped himself and them to the Loaves of Proposition in the Ark; and thus strengthened they carried on their work.

You know the story of the Manna. The Hebrews were hungering in the desert and longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt. One morning, rising from their beds they looked out from their tents and saw the ground

covered with snowy flakes. Hurrying into the open in their curiosity and putting the particles to their lips they rejoiced to find them filled with a variety of delightful tastes. Every day for forty years the Manna fell from heaven for their strength and comforting. The actualization of that symbol is the Mass. For, at the Consecration the Bread of Angels falls from heaven upon the altar and at the communion rail for hungry mouths.

In the New Testament Christ multiplied a few loaves of bread and at Cana with a glance changed water in the jars into wine to refresh guests at a wedding feast. These two miraculous acts of charity were symbolic of the Eucharistic Feast. As the basket at Christ's feet became an inexhaustible fountain of loaves, so the tabernacle pours forth abundantly Sacred Hosts in full streams of grace. And as at Cana by a look He made an exquisite drink out of plain water, so in the person of the priest at the altar He gazes into the chalice of wine and by the words of Consecration converts its contents into the delicious draught of His Blood.

However, the most lovable figure of the

Feast of the New Testament was the Pasch which the Jews kept once a year in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt by the hands of Jehovah through the instrumentality of Moses.

Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament on the first Holy Thursday Night in order that it might be for all times a memorial banquet of our salvation from Hell through His death.

Christians have outdone the Hebrews in their Paschal Feast. All over the world from the beginning of Christianity to the present time hundreds of thousands of priests have said Mass every day and millions of Catholic lay-people have often received Communion with glad and thankful hearts, filled with the remembrance of Calvary.

c. *The Feast in Promise*

No truth is more clearly and insistently expressed in Holy Scripture than that of the Eucharist. Our Lord seemed to have wished to place It beyond all evasion and cavil. In St. John He promised to institute It and in the three other Evangelists we see

Him fulfilling His promise. Refer to the sixth Chapter of St. John and you will be struck by the number of times He declares that He will give His Body and Blood as food and drink.

The presumption is, that in these passages, He is speaking in a literal sense, because He is speaking in *prose*. If one could not accept the rule of literal speech in prose discourse there would be no foundation for mutual understanding between men speaking to men.

Moreover His disciples were scandalized at His words. But the only cause of their scandal was the thought of actually eating His Body and drinking His Blood. They would not have been scandalized at bread and wine being mere symbols of His Body and Blood or at consuming Him by Faith. Protestants give these two meanings to His words. But if Christ had meant only this He surely would have corrected His disciples and prevented them from deserting Him after His sermon on the Real Presence. "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? This saying is hard and who can hear it?" These words would never have been written about the disciples if Jesus

had not used His Eucharistic words in a literal sense.

Also though the Twelve with Peter at their head remained faithful to Christ, their fidelity was not due to their easy acceptance of His doctrine. In spite of its difficulty they stood by Him because they believed in His Divinity which was a voucher for the truth of any teaching, however repugnant it might be. For when Christ said to them: "Will you also depart?" Peter made answer: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Jesus tried to dissuade His disciples from going away by another thought: "Doth this scandalize you?" He said. "If then you shall see the Son of Man mount to where He was before?" By these words he signified the greater difficulty of believing in His doctrine after His Ascension. But it would not have been more difficult to consume Christ by Faith or by symbolic bread after His Ascension than before it. For these two ways of eating Christ are not influenced by distance. But it would be far harder to believe in the Real Presence after He ascended into heaven. Indeed it is impossible to understand how the Body of

Christ can be at the same time in heaven and in tens of thousands of churches on earth.

On other occasions when Jesus spoke in a figurative sense and was misunderstood, He took pains to correct the misapprehension. For instance, when He said to Nicodemus: "Unless a man be born again he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven": and when Nicodemus, mistaking His figurative words for literal, answered: "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Jesus explained: "Unless a man be born of *water and the Holy Ghost,* he shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Again, when He warned His disciples: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," He dissipated their misconception of His words by adding that He meant "hypocrisy" by "leaven." When He declared: "I have food of which you know not," His followers thought that He meant real bread. But He said: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." Why then, does He not in like manner disabuse His disciples of their literal interpretation of His Eucharistic words? Simply because He was speaking literally and wished His hearers to take what He said in a literal sense.

But even if Christ had wished to employ the words: "Eating My Body and drinking My Blood" in a figurative sense, He could not have done so. For the only figurative sense which "Eating My Body" had among the Jews was "persecuting Me." Is it conceivable that Christ would have said: "Unless you persecute Me you shall not have eternal life"? And drinking blood was so horrible to the Jewish mind that Christ could not have employed that figure of speech with any hope of winning His audience to His cause. And if you object: Why then did He institute a sacrament in which drinking blood would, literally speaking, play a part? I answer: Because He did not intend that we should drink in the carnal manner imagined by the Jews but in that semi-spiritual way to which we are accustomed at the altar and communion rail.

d. *Only Bread and Wine?*

Non-Catholics say that Christ's promise is to be taken only in a figurative sense, because 1st, the Real Presence is impossible; 2d, the words "are" "is" and "am" are frequently employed in the sense of "like,"

"represent"; 3d, Christ said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the *flesh* profiteth nothing."

1st: Catholics are not bound to prove from reason the possibility of the Eucharist; indeed they cannot, because It is a mystery, revealed by God. Non-Believers must assume the burden of trying to prove Its impossibility. Catholics, however, can and ought to answer their objections. The concept of the Eucharist is impossible to the imagination; difficult to the intellect; but not repugnant to the Omnipotence of God.

Also, mistaken notions of the Eucharist obscure the question of Its truth. For instance, some say: "How can Christ with His full stature be contained in a tiny host?" The Church teaches that Christ in the Eucharist is without extension. "How can the one Christ have many bodies in many hosts?" But the Church teaches that, not His Body, but only His locality is multiplied. Even multilocation is difficult to understand, but not beyond the power of God.

2d: In the passages referred to, Christ is, clearly, speaking in parables; and explains that He is doing so; in the Euchar-

istic passage, the case is quite different. Also, in the examples: "I am the door," "I am the vine," "I am the Good Shepherd" and "Christ is the rock," there is a natural similarity between the symbol and the thing symbolized. Christ is like a door, a vine, a good shepherd and a rock. But where is the likeness between bread and the Body of Christ? For Catholics who believe that they really eat the Body of Christ there is a likeness; because bread is eaten. But for non-Believers who have no such belief there is no more similarity than between a vegetable, rock, fruit, or river and the Body of Christ; no more similarity between wine and His Blood than between any other liquid and His Blood. True, Christ could have made bread an *artificial* symbol of His Body by His arbitrary power. But in case of such an institution He ought to have given notice of His intention to His followers. An artificial symbol cannot convey to men an idea of the thing symbolized unless the originator of the symbol acquaint his hearers with his figurative creation. How could Christ have expected His disciples to understand only the eating of figurative bread, when He said: "You

must eat My Body"? How could they have understood anything else than the eating of His actual Flesh?

3d: The assertion of Non-Believers that the Flesh of Christ is not in the Eucharist, but only His Spirit, received by Faith, is due to a misunderstanding of the Master's words. Christ was only rectifying the carnal misinterpretation of the Jews. They supposed that they were to eat His Flesh, killed and dressed like ordinary meat. Accordingly, He told them that His Flesh, without His Spirit, without His Soul, Divinity and Grace, would not quicken them; but His Spirit, His Soul, Divinity and Grace in His Flesh profiteth.

e. *The Feast in Fulfillment*

At the Last Supper Christ, taking bread, broke and gave to His disciples, saying: "Take ye and eat; this is my Body which shall be given for you." And blessing the chalice He said: "Drink ye all of this; for this is my Blood of the Testament which shall be shed for the remission of sin. Do this in commemoration of Me."

When a parent, preparing for death,

writes his will, he is exceedingly careful to word his ideas exactly, without any flourishes of rhetoric or figures of speech, for fear of any misunderstanding of his testament on the part of his children. Can we imagine then that Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, on the last night of His life with His disciples, when He was making what He Himself called His Testament, would have indulged in symbolic language instead of saying simply in literal language what He intended to convey? Hence, it is inconceivable that on Holy Thursday He was making an obscure reference to figurative wine and faith in Him. We recall too how on that occasion He declared: "Now I shall speak to you no longer in parables"; to which the Apostles answered: "Now Thou speakest plainly and we know what Thou sayest."

Suppose for a moment that His words were figurative. In that case the whole Christian people, believing unanimously in the Real Presence, for the first thousand years of our Era were in error in regard to a most fundamental doctrine. Christ in His goodness would surely have added a few words of explanation, could He have

done so, to guard His Church against so grotesque a mistake. He could have simply said it was not His intention that His words should be taken in a literal sense. And yet this easy and obligatory precaution He did not take. Therefore, either He was lacking in ordinary goodness and foresight, or His words were literal.

Christ's promise of His Body and Blood, in St. John, was literal. But the Last Supper is the only institution to which the promise can refer. Therefore, the words of the Last Supper must be taken in a literal sense.

Finally, St. Paul teaches that those who approach the holy table unworthily "eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Body of the Lord." If the Eucharist is only an affair of faith or figurative bread why should unworthy communicants be said to sin against the *Body* of Christ? Why not against His word, or His Soul or His Divinity? And how can there be question of discerning or not discerning the Body of the Lord in Communion if the Body of Christ is not there under the appearance of bread?

The fact that Christ called the contents

of the cup—*wine,* ("Of this fruit of the vine I will not drink again until I drink it with you, new, in my Father's House") does not militate against the Real Presence. Christ referred to the unconsecrated wine of the Passover Supper of which He and His disciples had partaken before the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Besides, Christ could have called His Blood *Wine* with perfect propriety because It was under the appearance of wine and because the Eucharist had been changed from wine. Also, it is quite common for Catholics to call Christ's Body *bread* and His Blood *wine.*

One of the prominent Anglican Divines of Wiseman's time said that Our Lord used "is" in the sentence "This is my Body" because in His language there was no word "represent." Wiseman studied the language and discovered no less than forty such words.

f. *The Feast and the Fathers*

The Fathers of the Church were a group of holy and learned men, living between the first and ninth centuries, who devoted themselves whole-heartedly and almost exclu-

sively to the study of God's Word. Many Protestants acknowledge the authority of their teaching. Hence, the interpretation which they gave to the Eucharistic words ought to carry the greatest weight. Now they all declare that Christ's real Body and Blood are under the appearances of bread and wine on the altar. Quotations from all of them are impossible on account of limitations of space. However, a few of the statements of St. John Chrysostom may be rehearsed on account of his graphic manner of expression: He said: "Parents often give their children to others to be nourished. 'Not so I,' says Christ. 'But I give you my own Flesh.'" "That which is in the cup is the same as that which flowed from the Cross." "When thou seest the Host say: 'This is that very Body which was pierced with a lance on the Cross.'" "He that was present at the Last Supper is the same that is here now at the altar and consecrates." "As many as partake of this Sacrament partake of Him who sits above adored by Angels."

But though we cannot quote from all the Fathers in detail, we can in a summary way state what they taught. First, they use the

word "change." In the figurative bread of Faith no change occurs; but in the Consecration of Mass bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. They say that the figures of the Old Testament, the Manna, the Loaves of Proposition and Melchisedec's offering of bread and wine were actualized in the New Law. Now while Mass can be considered as an actualizing of those figures, symbolic bread and wine are no more than figures themselves.— They taught that to explain the Eucharist recourse must be had to the Omnipotence of God. Only Omnipotence can cause the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ; but a created power could make bread and wine symbolic of the Body and Blood of Christ. They say that in presence of the Eucharist we cannot trust our senses. Protestants can trust their senses; for by sight, taste and smell they perceive real bread and wine before them. It is otherwise with Catholics. For while their senses proclaim the actual presence of bread, their Faith must deny it. Finally they say that the Eucharist is to be adored, contains the Body of Christ and is incomprehensible; statements which are not true

according to the Protestant explanation; but are true according to the Catholic.

It is apparent then that the Fathers believed in the Real Presence.

g. *Objections from the Fathers*

According to opponents of the Real Presence the Fathers taught, 1st, that the Eucharist is a symbol of the Body of Christ; 2d, that It is bread; 3d, that we eat It only spiritually.

An ambiguous text must be given that meaning which accords with the *context* from which it is taken. But the texts quoted by Protestants against the Real Presence are ambiguous, as we shall see presently. Therefore they must be interpreted in accordance with the general teaching of the Fathers on the Eucharist; which we saw in the preceding chapter is identical with the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The proposition: "The Eucharist is a symbol of the Body of Christ" can have at least five meanings; one Protestant and four Catholic: (a) the Body of Christ is not present on the altar at all, as Protestants

say; (b) the Eucharistic appearance of bread which we eat is a symbol of the underlying Body of Christ, which we eat; (c) the Eucharist is a symbol of Christ crucified; (d) also, of the mystical Body of Christ, the Church; (e) and of Christ in glory at His Father's banquet-board.

2d. "The Eucharist is bread" can have three significations: (a) that, as Protestants say, nothing more than bread is on the altar; (b) that the Eucharist is bread in appearance; (c) that It was made from bread.

3d. "To eat the Eucharist spiritually" is at least five-fold in meaning: (a) to eat by Faith alone. (The Protestant signification); (b) a manner of eating opposed to the carnal feeding, imagined by the Disciples, who misunderstanding His doctrine, "walked no more with Him"; (c) to feast on Christ not for the material sustenance of our body but for the spiritual strengthening of our soul; (d) to feed on Him with the spiritual dispositions of Faith, Hope, Charity, Desire and Repentance; (e) to eat Him invisibly in the sense that while we see the appearance of bread, we do not see the Body of Christ.

h. *The Feast in Verse*

The "Lauda Sion Salvatorem" of Thomas Aquinas contains a tender line on the Eucharistic food.

We are told that when the Pope invited contestants to emulate each other in verse in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, Thomas, the Dominican, and Bonaventure, the Franciscan, came to present their poems to His Holiness; but that Bonaventure tore up his manuscript when he heard the lines of Thomas. One would wish that he had refrained from indulging his destructive humility; for two other Franciscan poems—the Dies Iræ and Stabat Mater, dispose us to believe that Bonaventure's song, like them, would have become immortal. However the humility of Thomas was providentially restrained and so we still possess the treasure of his genius and piety. The hymn is prolific of suggestive comparisons. Here is one of them: "Pie Pelicane, Jesu Domine." The idea is: 'Oh tender Pelican, with the mother-bird's deep love for her brood.' The Pelican, in extremity of famine, pierces her breast with her bill to slake the thirst and satisfy the hunger of her

brood with red streams from her veins.

Christ in the Eucharist is compared to the pelican. A mother's love is tender; for she feeds her child with her own stores of food. But Christ's is tenderer; for He refreshes us with His own flesh and blood. The Jews of old were scandalized at the idea of eating the flesh of Christ because they missed what might be called the idea of His motherhood and our spiritual infancy. Have we also missed the idea? Does Christ refer to the mystery of Eucharistic Love when He tells us that unless we become as little children we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven? We grow up to be men and women and lose the simplicity of children. We wish not to be childish and we forget that we must remain childlike. We are but children, all of us, carried in the arms of Christ. Let us try to realize our littleness. Then we shall begin to appreciate Our Lord's maternal lovingness. And so whenever the Blessed Sacrament is presented to our imagination under the symbol of the Pelican let us recall that we are fledglings feeding at the breast of Christ on the jetting fountains of His Sacred Heart.

i. *The Feast and Pius X*

In a letter written to the whole Church in 1908 Pope Pius X. urged on all Catholics the frequent reception of Holy Communion. The Church, he says, has always been in favor of frequent Communion. For instance in the Council of Trent She encourages the faithful to receive at every Mass. Christ said: "I am the Bread that came down from heaven; not as the fathers did eat of old and are dead; those that eat of this bread shall live forever." But bread must be eaten every day. Also, every day the Hebrews partook of Manna in the desert. Therefore our Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ should be daily. In the "Our Father" we say: "Give us this day our daily bread." But the Fathers of the Church are unanimous in their belief that the request of that prayer has reference not so much to material food as to the Body of Christ. He quotes the example of the early Martyrs who in accordance with Christ's desire received frequently; and cites two Popes who urged the Faithful to approach the Holy Table often with piety. He disabuses infrequent and timid communicants

of their mistaken notion that the Eucharist was set up primarily for the reverence of tremulous adorers and as a reward for merit. Rather it is for the strengthening of needy men.

Objectors to frequent Communion allege a variety of motives for their aloofness from the table of the Lord;—e. g. they will become too good, they do not improve with frequent Communion anyhow, they do not need it, they fear what men will think, they dread routine, they have no time, it is more Godlike to overcome faults than to receive often, the Church does not require that we should approach the altar-rail more than once a year, frequent Communion is a novelty, they won't persevere in it, or they will acquire the habit gradually.

All these plausible arguments are swept aside in the body of the Pope's Letter; and the conclusion of the famous encyclical lends an unmistakable ictus to the doctrinal gesture of the Pope.

Wherefore, he says, in closing: all, of whatever station or condition of life, are allowed and encouraged to receive every day with devotion, on condition they are not in mortal sin and have a good intention,

i. e., do not approach through vain-glory or human respect or routine. They should however consult their confessor who may not refuse them provided the conditions, just named, be fulfilled.

IV

A PRESENCE

a. *Other Presences*

The presence of God in the visible Universe is a fact evident to reason. By His Immensity, Power and Knowledge, God is everywhere. He is in every stone, tree and sea, in every living being. He is in the sun, making it rise for our warmth; in streams, bidding them leap down from mountain tops to quench our thirst; in golden fields, weighted orchards and empurpled vines, helping them to lay out their sumptuous stores for us. He is in the snow, dew and rain. A Spiritual Ether, He surrounds us, so that like a fish in water or a bird in the air, we are encompassed by this Divine element. "In Him we live and move and have our being." "If I mount to the highest heaven or sink to the lowest depth," as the Psalmist says, "God is there."

Through Revelation we know of another Divine Presence on earth.

When the Jews journeyed from Egypt through the desert to the Promised Land God dwelt with them in a tent, to which Moses and Aaron resorted for instruction for their followers. So holy did His tented habitation become that when the Philistines carried away the Ark, they did so to their cost. So many misfortunes were visited on their sacrilegious heads that they hurried the holy thing back to its place.

When Solomon built the first temple of stone and cedarwood, inlaying the walls with plates of gold and adorning them with gems, the Ark was carried thither and placed in the Holy of Holies behind sacred curtains which the High-Priest reverently penetrated only at occasional times to learn the behests of the God of Israel.

Later on the God-Man was present in the Temple in bodily form.

One of the best means of arriving at a proper appreciation of an excellent thing is to contrast it with things of lesser excellence. The superior presence, then, of Christ in the Eucharist can be better estimated in the light of these presences, which, however comforting and sweet, are far in-

ferior to the indwelling of Christ in the Eucharist.

b. *The Eucharistic Presence*

Two characteristics of the Guest-Presence of Christ beneath the veils are Its perpetuity and universality. Christ dwells with us for all time and everywhere. Men marvel at the Apostolic antiquity of the Church. They admire her, hoary with age and yet fresh as a bride. They proudly trace back her rule from Pius XI. through an unbroken succession of Popes to Peter and Christ. But do they ever advert to the everlasting character of the Great Sacrament? Our Guest was with us when Imperial Rome glowed in her pride, when rude barbarians came down in a tide from the flood-gates of the North, toppling the superb structure of ancient civilization to the ground; when the states of Modern Europe were born and matured. Empires have risen, grown to power and decayed. Captains have won their victories and died. Sages have elaborated their systems of philosophy and perished from the earth.

Poets have sung their songs, each one of them singing his swan-song at the end. But through all the vicissitudes of more than nineteen hundred years He has remained unchanged.

The Guest-Presence of Christ is also universal. Within cathedrals in European capitals and in chapels in obscure nooks of the world; on the Negro Continent and in places of eternal snow He dwells, whiter than snow. And in the torrid south, amid palms, coconut trees and luxuriant verdure, by the side of dreaming seas, in the paradises of earth, He tarries for the sake of the bronzed children of the archipelagoes. In our own land beneath ten thousand spires He is concealed, so that when exiles come to our shores, lost amid new faces and other minds, and distracted by the whirl of our hurrying life, they enter a Catholic Church perhaps, behold the same altar, sanctuary lamp and tabernacle to which they were accustomed, and realize in the best sense of the word that they are at home again;—as much at home as they were beyond the sea.

In the Old Testament God dwelled in only one temple of the world. Now He dwells everywhere. The Hebrews enjoyed the

presence of Christ for only thirty-three years. But He is with us for all time. If then the Psalmist of old could exclaim: "What nation hath had its gods so near to it as Our God is near to us," with how much more reason cannot we Christians give expression to the same thought?

c. *Plato and St. John*

How explain the Guest-Presence of Christ in the Eucharist? Surely, this is not an extravagant question; for it is concerned with an extravagant fact. The fact is certainly extraordinary; for it seems to be inconsistent with the Majesty of Christ as God, with His human happiness in heaven and with the deserts of man.

In the Epistle of Our Lady's Nativity, we read that Wisdom, i. e., the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, was with the Creator at the founding of the world. Through Him and by Him all things were made. He helped to lay the foundations of the earth; He filled in the seas; He raised the bulk of hills and mountains; He spread out the beauty of fields; He clothed the earth with woods. All this we read; and at the end of

the passage, this thought occurs: And His delight is to be with the children of men.—Here is a paradox. Here, indeed, is a union of the lowly with the divine. Here is a condescension which reason cannot understand: That the majesty of heaven should identify itself with the lowliness of earth!

In the "Confessions" of St. Augustine there are two remarkable parallel passages. The first is taken from the opening chapter of St. John; the second, from Plato, the Philosopher of the Greeks. They are strangely alike and strangely unalike. For just as St. John says: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," so says Plato, describing the glory of the Universal Idea of Truth. But whereas the Evangelist adds: "And the Word was made flesh," Plato refrains from saying and believing that the Divinity would empty Itself, taking the form of a slave. John by the light of Revelation could understand the lowering of God to flesh. Plato by the light of reason could not. How then could he have comprehended the lowering of both Divinity and Humanity to the form of bread? And if it was unintelligible to Plato, surely it would be so to us,

if we had not Christ's word for the marvel.

The Eucharist then seems inconsistent with Christ's dignity as God. It seems also to be opposed to His happiness in heaven as Man.

Probably you have read St. John's description of the New Jerusalem. Its streets are of gold, its dwellings are palatial, its walls, ramparts and gates are of precious stones. Christ reigns at the right hand of God. A hundred thousand Seraphim and Cherubim, Powers and Potentates are at His beck. He looks down at myriads of red-stoled martyrs, confessors and white-veiled virgins. Sometimes He walks in the fields of Paradise, like a shepherd with His flock, followed by those who sing the canticle of the chaste.

Is it not inexplicable that Christ should, in a sense, leave this beatitude to take up His abode among men in the desert places of earth, in our valley of tears?

d. *Ingratitude*

Moreover the Eucharist appears to be irreconcilable with the deserts of men.

Christ came amid Angels on the first

Christmas night; and He was received in a stable on straw beneath the cold stars, while those who should have been hosts and hostesses to Him kept high festival yonder in Bethlehem in lighted inns, by bright tables, at glowing hearths, oblivious of their Guest. During the years of His retirement at Nazareth His sole court were one woman and one man. In His public life, though He spoke as no man had spoken before, the greater number of the Jews were deaf to His eloquence. And on the First Good Friday many of the beneficiaries of His charity cried for His death on the Cross. He, the Prince of Heaven, had come down to earth to woo Jerusalem; and she rejected Him.

And as He had been treated, so would His Bride, the Church, be treated after Him. While pagan Rome would carouse in the face of heaven, she would be forced to crawl like a worm, hidden and despised in the Catacombs. In the heretical fourth and fifth centuries, She would be driven from her seat, while her enemies feasted with emperors. During the Middle Ages, She would be forced to withstand the aggressions of kings. In modern times She has been

expelled from France, largely excluded from Germany, ignored in England, banished to bogs in Ireland, often misunderstood in America. She has been called the Woman in Scarlet and the Beast of Babylon.

Surely one would think that Our Lord had had experience enough of the thanklessness and cruelty of men in His own Person and that of His Church, to disillusion Him of His high idea of them and to quench His enthusiasm for their companionship.

Why, therefore we ask, did He choose to become our perennial Guest on the altar, despite these three deterrent motives to the contrary?

e. *A Foolish Guest*

God is with us in the Eucharist because as Scripture says His delight is to be with the children of men. A lover either consciously or unconsciously seeks his own good and the good of his beloved. And so Christ, the Great Lover, in the Incarnation and the Eucharist, wished to dwell with us, for His own sake and for ours.

Here we are face to face with what may be called without irreverence the foolishness of

God. Love is blind among men; and it is supremely blind in God. A man will love where there is no loveliness because he weaves a resplendent garment out of his own imagination and fashions a beauteous mask out of his own heart's tenderness; then clothes his idol, disguises its uncomeliness and loves it passionately, oblivious of the underlying unattractiveness. Thus God acts with us. Ask the human lover why he loves and he will answer with charming unreasonableness: "I love because I love!" Ask Christ why he lavishes His tenderness upon us unappealing denizens of earth; and with the same blind insufficiency of motive, He answers: "I love because I love!" Since Christ found His delight in being with us in the flesh for thirty-three years and takes His pleasure in dwelling near us always in the guest-house of the Church, should not our chief happiness lie, reciprocally, in consorting with Him?

f. *The Foolishness of Men*

Christ wishes to be with us, as our Guest on the altar, also for our sakes.

In St. Ignatius' Contemplation on the In-

carnation, we see the Holy Trinity looking down at the sad scene of earth. Men of all sorts; kings and slaves, white and black, educated and ignorant, wealthy and destitute, were hurrying to the abyss. The Second Person descended to earth to stem the tide. During His mortal life He went about doing good;—giving food to the hungry, health to the sick, life to the dead and light to those in the shadow of ignorance. He narrowed the gate-way of Hell, opened the portals of heaven, and made us children of God by dying on the Cross.

On the day of His Ascension He realized that what the world had been before His coming, it would still be. Temptation and sin, vexations, worriment, fears, regrets, doubts, scruples, griefs, sickness and hunger, would torment men as before. Death, the loss of fortune, of honor and wealth, wars and famine, would prostrate the race of men. He had become an adept as Comforter in the past; and men would need again His consolation and strength. And so He resolved to stay with us through the centuries. He is with us on the altar now; and when the last day will come, amid the universal ruin of a world, He will still be

in His Tabernacle, receiving the terror-stricken children of men and preparing them to face the Judge.

g. *Hosts and Hostesses*

I picture to myself Our Lady spending hours and even whole days and nights before the Tabernacle in her own chapel after the Ascension of her Son, with her eyes fixed and her heart centered on Him as they were on the Holy Night when He lay newborn in the Crib.

I picture to myself the Apostles after their mission to the world, in strange lands alone, some amid savages, others amid the aristocracy of the world, after the heat and sweat of the day kneeling in the darkness and silence of the night, communing with their Eucharistic Lord, dreaming of the old days around the Sea of Galilee, recalling His every look and word and comforting themselves with the assurance that soon, very soon, they would see Him again in heaven, never to be parted from Him more.

In the Catacombs virgins and heroic boys, converted noblemen and matrons of Rome, kept daily watch before the Guest, drawing

from Him the strength to lay down their lives for the Faith.

Down through the centuries young girls innumerable have declined the alluring pleasures of the world, and young men have foregone the prospects of brilliant careers, withdrawing and hiding themselves behind monastery walls or in convent cells, so as to enjoy His company. And they have discovered there to their delight that He is father and mother, wife, husband and children to those who reject these precious blessings of earth for His sake.

Even in our days there are Religious whose sole occupation it is to keep watch at the altar rail and entertain Our Lord.

Thousands of Catholic mothers in the midst of the engrossing occupations of their homes flash thoughts and aspirations toward the Blessed Sacrament. Thousands of fathers returning from their work step into the Church to greet their Heavenly Lord. Thousands of young ladies and men have derived from the Tabernacle strength against the enticements of sin.

You may have read how St. Louis of France spent much of his time in camps and courts but more of it in Church. How

Blessed Thomas More, the Martyr Chancellor of England, used to stop in to salute His Master before going to court. How St. Joan of Arc in the flush of victory glowed before the Tabernacle and in the melancholy days of her imprisonment found Christ her only Friend.

But why hark back to the past? Catholic churches are always open and the Faithful take advantage of the circumstance. At almost any hour of the day some hosts and hostesses are entertaining their King in the Guest-Chamber of the Church.

h. *Other Hosts and Hostesses*

But by far the greater number of men do not even know of the Guest-Presence of the King. Of those who believe in It, very few act up to their belief. And of those whose actions in some way accord with their belief, how few have the finer touches of love! Contemplate the world. Observe the hum of its commerce, the buzz of its manufactories, the whirl of society, the glitter of the theatre, the comforts of home, the luxuries of palaces, the honor, wealth, bodily pleasure and pride of place; set this glowing pan-

orama on one side, and on the other side place Our Lord in His Tabernacle; then tell me to which side men gravitate. Look at the vehicles passing up and down the avenues, the men and women hurrying to and from work or amusement, see the office-buildings, filled with hard workers, reading, writing, conversing, thinking, planning; and tell me how many thoughts and affections flash toward the Eucharist out of this cloud of human energy! As men of old thought that the earth was the center of the universe, the sun being a mere torch set up in the sky to lighten their way, so today, though the Eucharist is the center of the spiritual world, whereas the earth with its material interests is atomic in importance, yet men look upon the Host as no more than a little white sun which is to shed an occasional ray of light on their lives. Gentlemen graciously salute a friend in the street but will not step into the Church to pay their respects to the King of kings. Ladies invite guests to their homes, lavishing on them every attention, but forget to greet the Lover of their souls. They are proficient in social amenities with regard to their fellowmen but are lamentably wanting

in them in dealing with the Man of men.

In olden times pilgrims worked their weary way to Palestine, with their cockle-shell and staff and shoon, to kiss the ground on which Christ had stood. Why will they not walk a few paces to kiss His very feet? Last year tourists travelled to Rome to reverence the Pope. Why are they forgetful of Christ at home, of whom the Pope is only Representative? They will stand in admiration of the windows, galleries, pillars and altars of a cathedral, oblivious of Him who is its very soul. If Christ came to earth only once in a hundred years, His servants would devoutly prepare for His arrival; or if He abode in only one place of the world they would make pilgrimages to it. Why are they callous, now that He dwells in every city and town all the time?

i. *Routine*

We have become accustomed to the Eucharistic sweetness of God. Familiarity has bred, if not contempt, at least indifference. We have allowed ourselves to be subjected to the baneful influence of routine. There is a likeness of what I am speaking

of in our attitude of mind towards the physical world. God spread out the magnificent spectacle of the Universe to charm our hearts. It is a panorama of loveliness. But we have become habituated to it. Many a man will hurry to a theatre to gaze, awe-struck, at scenery on the stage;—a few pieces of canvas daubed with paint; yet stand unmoved before the living frescoes of sky, earth and sea. How many cross the ocean in a floating palace, chattering, unconscious of the sublimity of the roaring deep? Or climb a mountain, deaf to the eloquence of its solemn silences? Or tread their way through a forest, with their hearts dead to the pulsations of its hearts of oak? Or look at the sky at night, unmindful of its lesson of infinity? Or pluck a field-flower from its stem, a masterpiece of God, raise it to their nostrils, then carelessly fling it to the winds? Not unlike such indifferentists are we in our view of the world of Faith in general and with regard to the Eucharist in particular.

In the beginning of Christianity men turned with disgust from the gorgeous but degrading life of pagan times to behold, entranced, the Apocalyptical splendors of the

new Faith. But with the passing of centuries the colors have dimmed for our scaled eyes. Converts in the spring-time of their change of religion cannot marvel enough at the sublimity and sweetness of Catholic Faith, so long kept from their view. But to those who have been bred in the true Religion, the world of Faith too often appears to be a region of abstract and colorless truths.

I am not referring to *sensible* indifference which is due to a withdrawal of the consolations of sense. This, far from being matter for reproach, may be a sign of holiness or a help to it. Generally in the beginning of our spiritual career, we are favored with the sensible caresses of God. These are characteristic of youthful sanctity and are often enough withdrawn from the grown. If we enjoyed them continuously we would become effeminate and like a mercenary serve God for His sweets, not for Himself. The saints were not habitually in bliss before the Tabernacle. Often they were as dry as desert sands. And they gained merit by fidelity under stress. Those therefore are mistaken who complain of a loss of Faith in the Eucharist when in reality they are

only not impressed, and who lessen the number of their visits because they do not feel.

But I am speaking of a spiritual indifference, which, under the influence of routine and familiarity, is due to a more or less deliberate aversion from the Eucharist and reversion to the world.

j. *The Mystical Wand*

The means of restoring our keen Faith in the Eucharist is prayer. Every man is a magician, who with the mystical wand of prayer can conjure up a world of spiritual beauty and joyousness. In the Gospels Christ elaborated on the efficacy of prayer. The Fathers took up the parable and helped to drive the lesson home. Possibly you know its power by personal experience. When sunlight falls on heaped-up clouds in the west at evening they glow with imperial colors; but when the sun sinks they fade into melancholy mists. This is a simile of the respective effects of prayer and prayerlessness on all the truths of the world of Faith. In particular when we contemplate the Eucharist through prayerful eyes, Christ ap-

pears in all His lovableness. But when prayer wanes we look only at a white Host and a cup of wine. You need not pray with the lips nor become a contemplative. Only kneel with your eyes fixed on the tabernacle door. Then you may trust that, as Our Lord came forth from the tomb on Easter morning, revealing Himself to Magdalen and thrilling her with love, so He will leave the tabernacle and walking down the aisle in spirit to you will tell you what it means; —will explain to you, His host or hostess, the significance of the Eucharist as your Guest.

V

A SACRIFICE

a. *The Purpose of Sacrifice in History*

A sacrifice may be defined with sufficient accuracy to satisfy our present purpose as the destruction of some material thing in recognition of God's supreme dominion over it and over all else. Destruction is well accommodated to this purpose. For it signifies that we wish to place the object destroyed in the hands of the Lord of all things by depriving ourselves of it and its use.

From time immemorial sacrifice has had a place in the religions of all men. Before the promulgation of the Mosaic Law men sacrificed to God. Cain, Abel, Melchisedec, are instances. The Law of Moses established an elaborate system of oblations. In the superb temple of Jerusalem, erected by Solomon, there were two altars, the one of incense and the other of flesh and blood. To the present day remnants of pagan tem-

ples in classic lands bear witness to the sacrificial form of worship prevalent in the gentile world of Rome and Greece. Thousands of victims, many of them human, were immolated by the Mexicans in the days of Aztec glory. Missionaries have discovered in most remote climes forms of sacrifice among most benighted tribes.

The Jews sacrificed by divine command. The Gentiles did so either by a divine command, disfigured and mutilated by pagan influences, but yet traceable to genuine sources; or through an innate instinct which, after all, was the law of God in their hearts. A student of history then must recognize that sacrifice is a form of religion most acceptable to the Deity. Besides the glory of God, which is the principal purpose of Sacrifice, also gratitude for His gifts, atonement for sin and impetration of new benefits, are three ends essential to Sacrifice.

b. *The Last Prophet*

You all know in general what Mass means. Over and over again you have seen the priest come forth from the sacristy in alb, chasuble, stole and maniple with chalice and

patin in his hand. You have seen him make confession of sin at the altar-step, mount to his place, read portions from the missal, pray, offer bread and wine, pronounce the words of Consecration and consume the Body and Blood of the Lord. Now this is Mass.

Is Mass only an elaborate ceremonial or a substantial reality? Is it mere mummery or an offering of value? Mass is the genuine sacrifice of the New Law, instituted by Christ.

The Prophets were majestic figures among the people of God, whether they denounced or promised or lamented or rejoiced. When we meditate on the Nativity we gaze at the wrapt countenance of Isaias. In Holy Week, with our thoughts centered on Calvary, we look into the melancholy eyes of Jeremias. But when we turn back the pages of Scripture for the revealed prophesy of the Mass, the wrathful visage of Malachy flashes at us out of the darkness of the past.

In point of time Malachy was the last of the twelve Prophets of the Lord. He lived in the days of decadent Jewish ceremonial. The ancient sacrificial rites, instituted by

God, had been most elaborate and detailed. Only the choicest creatures were to be offered as victims to the Author of life. Latterly the ministers of the Temple had been placing on His altar polluted bread and animals marred by some or other physical defect. The Majesty of Heaven was outraged and the heaven-sent Prophet came to the guilty priests with maledictions on his lips. Listen to the words he spoke: "The son honoreth the father and the servant his master. If then I be a father where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts. You offer polluted bread upon my altar and ask: 'Wherein have we polluted Thee?' If you offer the blind for sacrifice is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick is it not evil? I have no pleasure in you and I will not receive a gift from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to the going down My Name is great among the Gentiles and in every place there is a Sacrifice and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation; for My Name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The flesh of the Jewish priests must have crept and their blood run cold at

the sound of these words. They knew that their negligence was a sacrilege; and now they are told that their sin will be punished, their offerings will be despised. Jerusalem and its temple will cease to be the center of the religious world, the hated Gentiles will be substituted for them and in every quarter of the globe a new Sacrifice will be offered to God.

Their loss is our gain; and therefore while we cannot but sympathize with them and lament their sin, we may rejoice nevertheless that it was the occasion of establishing the sublime Sacrifice of the New Law. At the same time a forcible reminder is given of the possibility of God's withdrawing His Spirit also from us if we despise or neglect the Mass.

c. *Prophesies of the Mass*

Malachy prophesied the Mass. Clearly, he did not refer to a Jewish sacrifice; for God said to the Jewish Priests: "I will not receive a gift of your hands." Nor to pagan sacrifices which in their repulsiveness could not have been called "clean oblations." Nor to the Sacrifice of Calvary, of-

fered only once in one place; for the promised Victim would be offered all over the earth, from the rising to the setting of the sun. Nor to the sacrifice of mortification and prayer; for while this sacrifice was as old as the human race, Malachy's was to be new. Hence the Mass is meant, a sacrifice among the Gentiles, clean, perpetual, universal and new.

The foregoing interpretation of Malachy's text is confirmed by the authority of the Fathers, Justin, Iranæus Chrysostom and Augustine. St. Justin says: "Of our sacrifices among the Gentiles, offered in every place, i. e., of the Eucharistic bread and cup, the Prophet Malachy spoke, saying that by them we would glorify the Lord." The words of Iranæus are equally pointed: "At the Last Supper Jesus said, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood,' committing this sacrifice to His Apostles. Of It the twelfth of the Prophets, Malachy, spoke when he said: 'I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord,' " etc.

The second prophesy of the Mass is contained in the Psalmist's words to Christ: "Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec." Melchisedec in the

Old Testament offered a sacrifice of bread and wine. Christ, therefore, was to sacrifice in bread and wine. And since the oblation was to be perpetual, Christ, on leaving life, committed His priestly office to His Apostles and their successors in the words: "Do this in commemoration of Me." St. Paul used the Psalmist's text to prove the Mass. St. Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, St. Augustine and St. Jerome assert that it is a foretelling of the Mass.

St. Paul, St. Cyprian, St. Leo the Great, St. Clement and St. Augustine declare that the Mass is the Sacrifice of the New Law, though they make no reference to the prophesies of Malachy and the Psalmist. St. Paul says: "We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat," referring to the exclusion of the Jews from the participation in the Mass. St. Cyprian: "In the church the priest offers the same Sacrifice as Christ Himself offered" and "Day by day in times of persecution and of peace we offer the sacrifice whereby the Faithful are prepared to give themselves as sacrificial victims by a martyr's death." And St. Leo, the Great: "The one oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ is substituted for all

the former sacrifices." St. Clement speaking of the Eucharistic liturgy calls the minister "The High-Priest of our oblation." St. Augustine in his Confessions requests his readers to bear in mind at the altar of Eucharistic Sacrifice the soul of his departed Mother, Monica.

d. *The Nature of Mass*

The priest of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is Christ, the human minister being only His representative. The Victim is Christ. The purpose is the four-fold purpose of sacrifice in general. The principal part is the Consecration of bread and wine. The destructive act of the Sacrifice is mystical, i. e., not real; only equivalent.

According to some theologians Mass is an equivalent Sacrifice of Christ because the words of either Consecration would destroy Christ if this were possible. For since the words of Consecration *effect* what they *express;* since the first words *express* only the Body of Christ ("This is My Body"); since the second words *express* only the Blood of Christ ("This is My Blood"); it follows that only the Body of Christ would be placed

under the form of bread, only the Blood of Christ would be placed under the form of wine; in other words, Christ would be immolated by the sword of the words, were it not that "Christ dieth now no more." Thus though the sacrificial act is not *really* destructive of Christ it is *equivalently* so, in the same manner as a well-aimed sword-thrust at a man would rightly be called mortal even though the victim did not die on account (let us suppose) of a special gift of bodily immortality.

According to a second group of theologians Christ is equivalently sacrificed at Mass, because He is deprived of the ordinary activities of His Body. Since Our Lord in the Sacred Host is not extended in space, how, these men ask, can He hear, see, taste, move—actions which require the extension of a body in space? Therefore, since one without the use of bodily faculties is, practically speaking, dead, Our Lord at the Consecration of Mass, though really possessed of life, is equivalently dispossessed at least of the corporal part of it.

Others again say that Christ is equivalently sacrificed at Mass, because He is reduced to the condition of food. Food in

general is some or other substance which has been deprived of life, before it is fit for use; for instance, meat and grain. Christ, therefore, as food, though really alive is equivalently dead.

These are opinions worthy of respect, but not obligatory as a matter of belief. We may choose any of them we please or reject all of them. They should occasion no scruple or perturbation of mind. For they are no more than good attempts at an explanation. The *manner* of explaining the equivalent destruction of the Victim at Mass has not yet been discovered with certainty nor defined. The great *fact* to which we must cling is that there is an equivalent sacrifice, however it be explained. In other words what we as Catholics must hold is that at Mass the God-Man offers Himself to God for the glory of God and the salvation of man.

Here then is the sublime Sacrifice of the New Law, the center-piece of Christian Worship, the one mediation between God and man. Calvary was the greatest spot on earth. The altar is another Calvary. The Crucifixion was the greatest event in history. Mass is the Crucifixion, continued in a pain-

less and unbloody manner. What a majestic and tremendous mystery this is! All the pomp of worldly power and pride of place, all the wealth, honor, preferments, refinement, education and luxuries of the world shrink to puny proportions in comparison with this astounding fact of Faith.

e. *"It is the Mass that Matters"*

Now possibly in the light of this mystery non-Catholics will understand the devotion and reverence of Catholics for Mass. They have beheld streams of worshippers hurrying every Sunday from all quarters of the parish to Church. They have been edified. But at the same time they may have questioned in their hearts the advisability of what they see. They may have solaced themselves with the reflection that they themselves please God by praying in the secrecy of their home. No doubt they do. But at home they offer no sacrifice to God. Catholics go to Church to offer sacrifice. As Mary, John and the holy women went up to Calvary, so they hurry to the sanctuary to stand at the foot of the cross and to be bedewed, like those first sharers in His Pas-

sion, with the saving blood of the Lamb.

Now non-Catholics can comprehend the significance of the Church's elaborate ceremonial. They may have thought in the past that the gorgeous pageantry of lights, incense, laces and resplendent vestments around the altar were only a theatrical display intended to catch and hold the impressionable and ignorant. Now they can see that it is the Catholics' expression of gratitude, love and joy. Christ was sacrificed once amid jeers. Now He shall be offered with honor. On Calvary He died to the doleful accompaniment of earthquakes and signs in the heavens. Now He shall be raised aloft on golden patin and in bejewelled chalice amid thundering organ-peals of the Gloria, Alleluia, and Hosanna.

Now neither Catholics nor non-Catholics can explain the supine negligence of some members of the Church, who do not scruple to lie in their slothful beds on the Lord's Day or hie themselves lightly to some place of amusement without Mass, or in case they attend it, allow their thoughts to run riot in the holy place or sit, lolling, nodding to friends and even conversing, with an astounding obliviousness of majesty, as

though they were in a theatre; instead of falling upon their knees and hiding their faces in their hands or striking their breasts like the Centurion on Calvary, exclaiming with him: "Truly this is the Son of God."

It must be evident to all now why the Saints wished to hear as many Masses as possible and why teachers of the Church have said, not in the effusiveness of extravagant piety but in strict truth, that one Mass heard with perfect dispositions is more pleasing to God than a thousand heroic martyrdoms without Mass.

Now it is clear why to the Catholic mind, a non-Catholic church, despite its architectural perfection and the piety of its congregation, must seem as hollow as vanity; like a word without its thought, like a ring without its jewel, like a face without its eye, a channel without its stream, a sky without its sun, a shell without its kernel, being deprived, as they themselves admit, of the very heart and soul of a church, the altar of sacrifice.

Now it is evident why the personal sacrifices of individual souls:—sacrifices of sorrow, tears and prayer—though very val-

uable in themselves are nothing in comparison with Mass.

You may often have considered why the wrathful hand of God, upraised to smite, has not fallen many a time on the sinning world. It has been stayed from day to day by the meek cry of Jesus rising from the altar stone: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

You may have marvelled in reading history why the persecuted Catholics of England and Ireland, though languishing in bogs and mountain-recesses or in hiding-holes in their own homes like rats, yet radiated from their souls a heavenly joy at the prospect of being able to hear an occasional Mass; and why many a priest from beyond the seas risked everything, with the vision of Tyburn Hill before his mind, to carry to them the precious boon of their desire. You may have marvelled at this. But now you understand.

Now you understand the unique purity, typified by the unflecked altar-cloth, waxen tapers and white vestments, which befits a priest; the unspeakable degradation of a fallen priest; and the consequent obligation of the Faithful to pray and pray again and

again that he may stand in strength and purity of life.

Now it must be apparent to you why Catholics reverence their priest. They may like him as a man, respect him for his learning, admire him for his accomplishments, love him as a confessor; but they venerate him in that he summons from high heaven and holds in his frail hands Almighty and Eternal God. And if perchance he should lack the qualities of mind and heart, either innate or acquired, which naturally appeal, they gladly forget his defective personality in the all-absorbing thought of his official dignity.

f. *Participating Sacrifice*

Revere and love the Mass! Offer It for the glory of God, in thanksgiving for His generosity, in atonement for sin and in impetration of new benefits. You need help for yourself? Offer Mass for it. You have an erring relative? Obtain his amendment through this Sacrifice. You know a non-Catholic friend who would like to enter the Church? Pray for him, mortify yourself for him, converse with him, teach

him, give him a good example; but above all offer Mass for him. You have near and dear ones enveloped in purgatorial flames? Extinguish their consuming fires with the altar's red, cooling streams.

But you must accompany the offering of Mass with personal sacrifice. Just as personal sacrifice without Mass is vain, so, inversely, is Mass, without it. The servant is not greater than the Master. The Master died. The servant also must die to self. There is a crimson altar in every human breast upon which must be placed daily oblations of mortification incident to Christian life. It is not right for us to laugh while Christ is weeping, to be crowned with flowers while He is pierced with thorns, to rest upon a bed of flowers while He lies on the wood of the Cross. Can Christians have the heart to cloy their palates with delicate viands while their Savior's tongue is blackened with thirst, to set their hands with jewels while His are set with nails, to prop their feet on cushions of down, while His feet rest on a nail-pierced block, to flatter their flesh with fine linens and silks, while He hangs in a rag? This is not right for Christ-women and Christ-men.

Hence, whenever you hear Mass, think of the great High-Priest at the altar of Calvary, with Mary, John and Magdalen, the assistant priest and priestesses, distraught at His feet; and try to catch their spirit of individual, participating sacrifice, in order that henceforth your hearing of Mass may be a personal partaking in the Mass' sacrificial character.

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